

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

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OPTIMISTIC REPORTS ON WATERFOWL NESTING CONDITIONS CONTINUE

A uniformly early season of favorable weather has made it possible for waterfowl nesting to get well underway in the vital prairie pothole region, where there are good to excellent water conditions, the Interior Department's Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife reported today.

"This may be an excellent production year" believes Dr. Leslie L. Glasgow, Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish and Wildlife, Parks, and Marine Resources. "I am optimistic about the waterfowl situation this year."

When waterfowl nest early a higher percentage of the first nesting attempt are usually successful. The females that are unsuccessful in their first nesting attempt have an opportunity to renest and produce a brood before the water disappears.

An early season--and good water conditions--are vital to good production. Surveys are currently underway to gather data on the number of breeding birds and the size of waterfowl broods.

The optimistic outlook is based on reports coming in from Uncle Sam's pilot-biologists who are seeing a lot of water and ducks already nesting in the Dakotas, western Minnesota, eastern Montana, and large parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

If these optimum conditions continue, the size of flights this fall could be significantly increased. Production has been down in recent years because of drought.

Additional surveys of nesting success will be conducted by the Bureau in July, then the observations from all surveys will be studied as the basis for autumn hunting regulations to be set by the Federal Government in August.

Only the crews operating in the Northwest Territories and Alaska have yet to report. During periods when ample water is present in the pothole country, fewer birds move into the northern waterfowl habitat.

Excerpts from some of the reports follow:

Southern Saskatchewan

Water conditions. . . remain very favorable. . . . Weather has been favorable for nesting success. Mallards and pintails were arriving in good numbers by mid-April and set up housekeeping quickly. . . . Season is probably well ahead of last year and may be a week ahead of normal.

Waterfowl populations will be up considerably over last year. . . . Pintails are amazingly more abundant as are most of the smaller ducks. Mallards are showing an increase over last year but are conspicuous by their relatively smaller numbers when compared to other species. Shovelers, baldpate, and gadwall are very much in evidence. We thought that blue-winged teal were few in numbers. However, they arrived about the first week in May and are now well represented. . . .

Quality of water in the deeper potholes and marshes is good. Any kind of normal rainfall this spring and early summer should see sufficient water areas to carry broods through the production season. . . . (Rossalius C. Hanson)

Southern Manitoba and Southeastern Saskatchewan

More ponds in our survey area than I have ever observed and I suspect the number of ponds in southern Manitoba may approach that of the mid-fifties. . . .

Indications are that the ducks got off to an early start. . . . On the minus side, over-water nesting cover is scarce in many areas. . . . (M. M. Smith and R. C. Droll)

Southern Alberta

Waterfowl habitat. . . is the best it has been for at least the last five years. Ducks are present in good numbers making this year potentially an excellent production year. . . .

We found that at reduced and normal cruising speeds it was quite difficult to tally the numbers of ponds. During 1967 and 1968 it was a simple process. . . . Weather conditions have been lovely. (K. Duane Norman)

North Dakota and South Dakota

Potholes were filled and spring water conditions were generally better than during the past 10 years

With normal spring and early summer precipitation, 1969 should be an excellent waterfowl production year. (Gerald Pospichal)

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